



## **Congresswoman Elizabeth H. Esty**

### **2013 End-of-Year Report**

In her first year in office, Congresswoman Elizabeth Esty has worked hard to address the needs of central and northwest Connecticut – using the insights and ideas of her constituents to develop commonsense solutions in Congress that can break through the gridlock in Washington. Esty has also helped lead the push in Congress on issues critically important to families, small businesses, and communities in the 5<sup>th</sup> District including job creation, support for our veterans and service members, and gun violence prevention. Esty’s office is also helping people in cities and towns across the 5<sup>th</sup> District cut through red tape on a wide range of issues – securing medal replacements for veterans, assisting families with visas and immigration, and making sure seniors get their Social Security checks.

### **Listening to Central and Northwest Connecticut**

Congresswoman Esty has made it a priority to spend time to listening to her constituents in Connecticut and seeking their input. Esty has hosted and participated in a variety of events in the district to hear from residents directly. She has held 12 Congress on Your Corner events in different cities and towns where constituents can speak with her one-on-one on any issue, frequently met with constituents in her New Britain and Washington, D.C. offices, and hosted and participated in a number of town halls, tele-town halls, and forums. To gather local ideas and concerns on some of the most pressing issues facing Connecticut and the country, Esty convened roundtable discussions on workforce development, veterans issues, immigration reform, the federal budget, sequestration, and gun violence prevention. She continues to tour manufacturers and small businesses across the district to hear directly from local employers and employees about ways to boost job creation. Esty also makes frequent visits to local social service organizations, senior centers, schools, colleges, and other sites to learn more about the needs of 5<sup>th</sup> District constituents.

### **By the Numbers**

- **175** days in central and northwest Connecticut
- **75,547** constituent contacts by email, telephone, fax, or in-person visits
- **12** Congress on Your Corner events
- **23** town halls, tele-town halls, conferences, and forums either participated in by the Congresswoman or hosted by her
- **12** roundtable discussions on topics including workforce development, veterans issues immigration reform, the federal budget, sequestration, and gun violence prevention
- **21** visits to different local manufacturers, small businesses, and small business walking tours
- **38** visits to social service organizations, colleges, schools, senior centers, and other sites in the 5<sup>th</sup> District.

## **Bringing Solutions From and For Connecticut to Washington**

Constituent input is the foundation of the legislation Congresswoman Esty has introduced in her first year in Congress. Based on what she's learned from constituents in central and northwest Connecticut, Esty has introduced bills designed to improve Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) education and workforce development for our manufacturers and workers; prevent gun violence and help the community of Newtown heal; ensure our veterans receive the care they need and the medals they have earned; preserve our environment and promote local, clean energy; and strengthen the federal framework for sustainable manufacturing. Several of the measures introduced by Esty are on the way to potentially becoming law. From the beginning, Esty also sought to serve on committees and a Congressional task force that work on issues of critical importance to central and northwest Connecticut including infrastructure, advanced manufacturing, and gun violence prevention.

### **Committee and Task Force Assignments**

- Member, House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure (Rail, Highways, and Aviation subcommittees)
- Member, House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology (Research and Technology subcommittee)
- Vice-Chair, House Gun Violence Prevention Task Force

### **By the Numbers**

- 8 bills introduced based on input from Connecticut
- 2 bills passed by the House
- 5 procedural attempts led by Esty to overcome obstructionism
- 8 major bills passed by the House that Esty fought to improve
- 30 floor speeches on topics of importance to the 5<sup>th</sup> District including manufacturing, veterans issues, and gun violence prevention
- 17 amendments for consideration before the full House or in committee
- 3 bipartisan floor amendments offered with Republican colleagues
- 60+ Committee hearings and meetings

## **Bills Introduced by Congresswoman Esty**

### **Improving STEM Education and Workforce Development for Our Manufacturers and Workers:**

- ***The Supporting Teachers and Enhancing Manufacturing (STEM) Jobs Act, H.R. 3243***
  - **Local Input:** During visits to manufacturers and a roundtable on workforce development, Esty heard from manufacturers and educators about the need to improve existing grant programs that support professional development for K-12 teachers in the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) fields.
  - **Bill Summary:** The STEM Jobs Act would help enhance teacher professional development programs at the National Science Foundation and the Department of Education to support our teachers in the critical STEM fields.
  - **Status Update:** Esty successfully advocated for provisions of the bill to be included in the Democratic draft reauthorization of the America COMPETES Act. The

COMPETES Act is legislation scheduled to be taken up in the next few months by the House Science, Space, and Technology Committee, on which Esty serves.

- ***The First Supporting Training for Employment Potential (STEP) Act, H.R. 3244***
  - **Local Input:** At manufacturer tours and a roundtable on workforce development, Esty heard from employers that it was increasingly difficult to find workers who had high-tech manufacturing skills and about the need to better connect our manufacturers who are hiring with employees who have the skills they need.
  - **Summary:** The First STEP Act would ensure that students in our state's technical high schools, community colleges, and apprenticeship programs can earn nationally-recognized credentials to match their skill sets with jobs in demand.
  - **Status Update:** Esty is working with colleagues, on both sides of the aisle, to have this bill incorporated into the reauthorization of the America COMPETES Act.

#### **Helping Newtown Heal:**

- ***The Helping Communities Rebuild after Deadly School Shootings and Other Traumatic Events Act, H.R. 2102***
  - **Local Input:** After the tragedy at Sandy Hook Elementary School, the town of Newtown decided they wanted to rebuild the school. There is a long established role for the federal government to help rebuild after unanticipated tragedies.
  - **Bill Summary:** This bill, introduced with the entire Connecticut Congressional Delegation, would authorize Newtown, and all school districts that have experienced mass tragedy, to apply for federal funding for site construction in the wake of mass tragedies through the existing SERV grant program.
  - **Status Update:** With the support of Connecticut's House Members, Esty offered this bill as an amendment to the Student Success Act, H.R. 5 in July. She testified before the House Rules Committee to advocate for an up-or-down vote on the amendment. House Republicans blocked her amendment from reaching the House Floor for a full vote. The Senate companion, S. 1025, has been successfully added to the Strengthening America's Schools Act, S. 1094.

#### **Assisting Our Veterans:**

- ***The Proper Replacement Of Medals and Performance Tracking (PROMPT) Act of 2013, H.R. 2354***
  - **Local Input:** In helping local veterans, Esty learned that some veterans had been waiting months or even years to receive the replacement medals they had earned. Veterans, current service members, or their eligible family members can request replacement medals on a free, one-time basis, but there are no standards currently in place to ensure these medals are replaced in a timely manner.
  - **Bill Summary:** Esty worked with Congressman Joe Heck, a Republican from Nevada and Colonel in the U.S. Army reserves, to introduce the PROMPT Act. The PROMPT Act would establish measurable standards and institute oversight for the timely, efficient replacement of military medals and decorations.
  - **Status Update:** The PROMPT Act was successfully added as an amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), H.R. 1960, which successfully passed the House and currently awaits action by the Senate.

- ***The Caregivers Expansion and Improvement Act of 2013, H.R. 3383***
  - **Local Input:** A current VA program has helped support 10,600 veteran caregivers and their families as of July 2013, but current law limits eligibility to veterans injured after September 11, 2001. Several constituents wrote to Esty's office to call attention to the need for expanding support for family caregivers.
  - **Bill Summary:** Esty's bill would extend eligibility for veterans' caregiver benefits to family caregivers of all veterans with a serious service-connected injury, including those who were injured in the line of duty.
  - **Status Update:** Esty pushed to bring this bill to the House Floor for a full vote on November 13, but the bill was blocked. The Senate companion, S. 851, passed the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs on September 17. Esty is continuing to work to gain support from colleagues in both parties for this bill.

**Preserving Our Environment and Generating More Local, Clean Energy:**

- ***The Lower Farmington River and Salmon Brook Wild and Scenic River Act, H.R. 2555***
  - **Local Input:** Esty joined Senator Richard Blumenthal, Senator Chris Murphy, Congressman John Larson, state and local leaders, community groups, and others who have long been working to designate the lower Farmington River as a "Wild and Scenic River."
  - **Bill Summary:** Esty introduced this bill in the House, which would designate specified segments of the Lower Farmington River and Salmon Brook in Connecticut as components of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. Senator Blumenthal and Senator Murphy introduced the bill in the Senate.
  - **Status Update:** With Congressman Larson, Esty requested a hearing in the House Committee on Natural Resources. This fall, the initiative to designate the Lower Farmington River as "Wild and Scenic" received support in a study from the National Park Service, which deems the Farmington River "suitable for designation as a Wild and Scenic River under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act."
- ***The Collinsville Renewable Energy Production Act, H.R. 316:***
  - **Local Input:** The Town of Canton has been working for years to receive needed federal authorizations to generate clean, locally produced hydropower. Esty introduced legislation to provide this authorization, working with Canton First Selectman Richard Barlow and Senator Chris Murphy, who had previously introduced this legislation while serving in the House.
  - **Bill Summary:** The Collinsville Renewable Energy Production Act would authorize the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) to permit the town of Canton to operate two small and dormant dams for hydroelectric power – helping to protect the environment and meet local energy needs.
  - **Status Update:** Esty led this bill to passage in the House. After successful action by the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, the bill now awaits final passage by the full Senate so that President Obama can sign it into law.

## **Ensuring that Federal Government Agencies Coordinate to Save Money and Help Small Businesses:**

- ***Economy, Energy, and Environment (E3) Initiative Evaluation Act, H.R. 2873***
  - **Local Input:** While visiting manufacturers across the district, Esty heard about the need for a stronger and better coordinated system of support at the federal level to encourage sustainable manufacturing in Connecticut and nationwide.
  - **Bill Summary:** The E3 Initiative Evaluation Act was introduced to ensure that the existing E3 (Economy, Energy, and Environment) program is working as intended and that appropriate resources are provided. The existing E3 program works to join forces with local communities to connect small and medium-sized manufacturers with experts from federal agencies, states, and regions. The E3 program is important to CONNSTEP, a Connecticut nonprofit that works to promote sustainable manufacturing in the state.
  - **Status Update:** The bill is currently being reviewed by the Energy and Commerce, SST (Science, Space, and Technology), Education and Workforce, Small Business, and Agriculture Committees in the House.

## **Standing Up for Connecticut's Priorities**

In addition to her own bills, the concerns, ideas, and priorities of constituents have helped guide Congresswoman Esty's actions and leadership in the House of Representatives. From pushing for commonsense bills introduced by her colleagues on many issues including gun violence prevention, to donating her pay during the unnecessary and irresponsible government shutdown, and to advocating for her constituents with leaders of both parties in Congress, Esty has consistently pushed for Connecticut's priorities in Washington.

- ***Advocating for a Federal Budget that Reflects Connecticut's Priorities and Supports Job Creation:***
  - **Local Input:** Esty hosted a roundtable discussion on sequestration cuts in Farmington with House Democratic Whip Steny Hoyer and local leaders in business, labor, social services, education, and government in February. She held a similar roundtable with local leaders on the federal budget in Meriden in March. Esty also gathered constituent input on central and northwest Connecticut's budget priorities by visiting local colleges, senior centers, and businesses as well as holding a tele-town hall with Congressman Chris Van Hollen, Ranking Member of the House Budget Committee.
  - **Actions Taken:**
    - Esty testified before the House Budget Committee to outline priorities emphasized by constituents for the Fiscal Year 2014 budget, including transportation and infrastructure, education, the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), and funding for gun violence prevention measures.
    - Esty supported a budget that would include critical investments in manufacturing, transportation and infrastructure, and education; reduce the deficit with commonsense cuts and tax reforms; and end the sequester.
    - Esty pushed for a full vote on the Stop the Sequester Job Loss Now Act, legislation that would immediately end the sequester.
    - Esty offered a successful, bipartisan amendment to the Defense Appropriations bill to reduce the deficit by cutting \$79 million in unnecessary funds.

- Esty has cosponsored bills to prevent a pay raise for herself and other Members of Congress, and she voted for the No Budget, No Pay Act, which became law.
- ***Working to Support the Infrastructure Needs of Local Communities***
  - **Local Input:** In May, Esty brought representatives from the Army Corps of Engineers together with local officials in Torrington, Thomaston, and Meriden to visit and discuss local flood control and water infrastructure sites in each community.
  - **Actions Taken:**
    - On the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, Esty worked with colleagues in both parties to develop the Water Resources Reform and Development Act of 2013 (WRRDA), the first water infrastructure bill since 2007. By cleaning out a \$12 billion backlog of old, inactive projects and establishing a faster, more flexible process to seek the Army Corps' assistance, WRRDA can help get flood control projects critical to local economic development and public safety in Connecticut off the ground. WRRDA was passed by the House with near unanimous support.
- ***Gun Violence Prevention and Helping Newtown Heal***
  - **Local Input:** Esty has met repeatedly with families, advocates, and local leaders from Newtown. She also held a town hall and roundtable discussions on gun violence to gather input on gun violence from constituents and community leaders across the district.
  - **Actions Taken:**
    - Esty joined her fellow vice-chairs on the House Gun Violence Prevention Task Force in developing a set of comprehensive principles to guide legislative efforts to help prevent future acts of gun violence.
    - Esty has cosponsored 16 bills to reduce gun violence and increase support for mental health improvements, including legislation to strengthen restrictions on gun trafficking and to close loopholes in the criminal background check system.
    - In particular, Esty has helped lead the call in the House for an up-or-down vote on enhanced criminal background checks.
    - Esty offered an amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act. The amendment would help spur private donations to help rebuild Sandy Hook Elementary School by creating a preference for defense contractors who make donations to support the rebuilding of schools where the learning environment has been disrupted due to a violent or traumatic crisis. The House Rules Committee denied an up-or-down vote on the bill.
    - Esty, along with the entire Connecticut House delegation, offered an amendment to the Student Success Act, which would make the construction of a new Sandy Hook Elementary School eligible for federal funds. She testified on the amendment before the House Rules Committee, but the Rules Committee blocked the amendment from receiving a vote.
- ***Fighting to End the Reckless Government Shutdown***
  - **Local Input:** During the reckless and unnecessary government shutdown, Esty regularly stayed in contact with constituents, particularly manufacturers and local officials, by phone to hear how the shutdown was affecting them.

- **Actions Taken:**
  - During the government shutdown, Esty donated her pay to nonprofit organizations in Connecticut that help our veterans.
  - Esty offered a motion on the House floor to immediately end the government shutdown, but her motion was blocked.
  - Esty took to the House floor to bring attention to how the shutdown was affecting Protein Sciences, a biotech company in Meriden that produces vaccines critical not only to the local economy but also to the nation's health.
  - Esty signed a discharge petition to force a vote on a bill to immediately end the shutdown.
  - When the House was finally allowed to vote on a bill to fully reopen the government, Esty was part of a bipartisan majority that passed the bill to end the shutdown and avert the risk of default.
  - After the shutdown, Esty led a letter to Speaker Boehner that was signed by 179 Members of Congress calling on him to publicly declare that he will not use the threat of a government shutdown or default as a political tactic in current budget talks.
- ***Working to Ensure Health Care Reform Works Well in Connecticut***
  - **Local Input:** Esty has made it a priority to help ensure that the Affordable Care Act works well for her constituents. She has consistently opposed attempts to repeal or defund the Affordable Care Act, but she believes that Democrats and Republicans should work together for commonsense improvements to the law to address problems where they arise.
  - **Actions Taken:**
    - Esty consistently voted against bills that would repeal or defund the Affordable Care Act.
    - Having heard from constituents who experienced cancellations and higher premiums due to the Affordable Care Act or due to their insurance companies, including 83 folks who wrote to Esty's office to share their stories, Esty crossed party lines to vote for the Keep Your Health Care Plan Act of 2013, legislation that would permit insurance companies to continue to offer discontinued plans to consumers.
    - Esty held 4 workshops on the Affordable Care Act for small businesses and individuals to help provide information to constituents on health care options available through Access Health CT and to help get people enrolled.
    - Esty assigned a member of her district staff to assist constituents who have questions about the Affordable Care Act and Access Health CT and to coordinate with representatives from Access Health CT, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the Department of Labor, and other federal and state agencies.
    - Esty helped secure a \$1.5 million grant for Danbury Hospital to help start their new Preventive Medicine and Public Health Residency Training Program, which will help expand access to primary and preventative care locally.
    - Esty supported a \$112,000 Affordable Care Act grant that was awarded to the primary care residency program at the Connecticut Institute for Communities Greater Danbury Community Health Center. The funding will be used for training more primary care residents and dentists in community-based patient care settings.

## **Serving Central and Northwest Connecticut Families**

Congresswoman Esty believes that one of the greatest honors and responsibilities she has is providing quality constituent services to the people who call the 41 cities and towns of the 5<sup>th</sup> District home. Since taking office on January 3, 2013, Esty's office has opened 612 constituent cases and helped secure the return of more than \$1,000,000 in savings for 5<sup>th</sup> District constituents from financial institutions and federal and state government agencies. Esty regularly holds Congress on Your Corner events across the district where both she and her staff are on hand to help constituents seeking assistance. She also continues to hold workshops on different issues where constituents can get information and get directly connected with people who can help.

### **By the Numbers**

- **471** constituent cases closed and **141** constituent cases currently open, totaling **612** cases in process or resolved
- **\$1,013,939** in savings that Congresswoman Esty's office helped secure for constituents from federal and state agencies
  - ***Social Security:** \$557,130*
  - ***Veterans Benefits:** \$241,935*
  - ***Medicare:** \$213,912*
  - ***IRS:** \$56,731*
  - ***Housing (HUD and financial institutions):** \$22,256*
  - ***Connecticut Department of Social Services:** \$3,158*
  - ***Department of Education:** \$2,580*
- **6** constituent workshops held to provide information on pertinent issues including the Affordable Care Act, student financial aid, and LGBT equality
- **239** tours planned for constituents in Washington, D.C.
- **87** American-made U.S. flags, including **45** flown over the U.S. Capitol Building, ordered for constituents
- **24** Candidates nominated to U.S. Military Academies
- **29** internships provided to Connecticut students in New Britain, CT and Washington, D.C. offices

### **Real Stories – A Snapshot of Services**

- ***Securing Social Security Checks for Seniors***
  - **Issue:** A veteran and senior citizen from Danbury had gone 8 weeks without receiving his social security checks at a time when he was facing potential foreclosure. He called Esty's office to request assistance.
  - **Assistance:** Esty's staff helped the constituent get one retroactive check approved and deposited in three days as well as make sure his Social Security payments were reinstated – securing a total of \$16,640.
- ***Recovering the Medals Veterans Earned in Service to Our Country***
  - **Issue:** A Korean War veteran from Newtown contacted Esty's office in April for assistance recovering the medals he earned but never received for his service in the Navy during the war. This was prompted by his grandchildren's interest in his service.



- **Assistance:** Esty's office worked with officials from the U.S. Navy to recover the medals he had earned, including the National Defense Service Medal, the Korean Service Medal, the United Nations Service Medal, and the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Korean War Service Medal. Esty presented his medal at a service in Newtown with the veteran and his family.
- ***Assisting with Visas and Immigration***
  - **Issue:** A constituent who was facing continued difficulty in getting a visa for her fiancé contacted Esty's office for assistance. She needed her fiancé to receive his visa so that he could join her in the U.S. to get married
  - **Assistance:** Esty's staff worked with the U.S. Department of State and the American Embassy in Cairo. The fiancé was granted a visa last October, and the couple was married shortly after.
- ***Helping Homeowners***
  - **Issue:** A constituent from Newtown contacted Esty's office about foreclosure proceeding on her house that she believed were unfair.
  - **Assistance:** Esty's office was able to work with the constituent, the bank, and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to resolve the dispute, resulting in a return of \$9,005 in back fees and charges to the constituent.
- ***Cutting through Bureaucracy***
  - **Issue:** A constituent from Canton had suffered chemical poisoning on the job, but was denied Social Security Disability coverage. His family was also facing the loss of their home.
  - **Assistance:** Esty's staff contacted the Social Security Administration to advocate for the constituent. Within 6 weeks, the constituent had two years of retroactive payments in the bank and future payments secured for him and his family – amounting to a total of \$58,983.